

going away from hope and love and pleasantness! I wish—oh, I wish that I were going away from life too! but that is not likely—at twenty, that is not likely!”

“Joan!” he says, now thoroughly frightened, while a vague, cold terror girdles his heart and chills the hot river in his young veins. “Joan! what are you saying? I know that there can be nothing amiss really—what could there be?—what could have happened within these few hours?”

“Nothing has happened!” she answers, her pale lips still curving in that most bitter smile; “only that to-day I have been my own sexton, and have been burying my past and my future together in one deep grave. O love!” (in a voice, anguished indeed, but more natural—more like herself than her late so icy composure), “your labor is lost! you need not try to hide it from me any more; I know—to-day I know—what I am! your mother has told me!”

“What?” he cries, his face, a moment ago goodly and content as the fleecy sky above him, or the meek summer sea at his feet, all overcast with sudden clouds, while his eyes dart steady shafts of anger and fear—“what! she has dared!”

“Hush!” she says, with low authority, laying her cold hand on his wrathful mouth—“hush! She did well! Had I been she, and she I, I should have done the same. I am glad—” (speaking with firm and weighty slowness), “yes, glad that I have learned in time what an injury I was going to do you; I think—” (the softness of her tone tempered by a great softness)—“I think that you know that I would not willingly do you a mischief!”

“I am glad of it,” he says, quickly. “God grant that we mean the same thing! There is only one real mischief that you could do me!”

“And you know it all along—all the time!” she cries—a sort of triumph in her voice, “and yet you would have kept silence all your life, and have set me at your side as your honored wife! O love, it was well and worthily done of you, and I thank you—from the bottom of my heart I thank you for it!”

As she speaks, she humbly takes his hand and kisses it, while the tears, so long in coming, shower at last, in plentiful salt rain from her parched lips.

“For God’s sake, stop!” cries Anthony, snatching away his hand; “you humiliate me! Why, pray?” he goes on, red and stammering, “why should I have told you about it? why should we waste time in speaking of so ugly and outworn, and—unimportant a subject! Have not we had pleasanter themes, Joan?”

She shakes her head sadly. “Unimportant, is it? Alas! it is important enough to set us two forever asunder!”

“What?” he says, falling back uncertainly a step or two, as if one had heavily and suddenly struck him, while a great dread slides coldly along his limbs, and chokes back the crowding words that are hurrying to his lips.

“Do you think,” she says, speaking with the greatest sweetness, yet resolution withal, “that I love you so poorly as to saddle you forever with my disgrace? Do you think that I will let you—willing as you are—God bless you for that willingness!—couple your good, clean name with my stained one?”

“How?” he cries; the laggard words coming quickly enough now, in torrent-flow; words of utter scorn and contempt; “do I understand you right? Is it my rational, sweet, sensible Joan that is speaking? Are you going to set up a phantom, a bogey between us? because there are no real hindrances—because the path that leads from me to you is smooth and level as path can be—must you yourself build up impediments and throw obstacles—impediments of straw—obstacles of air?”

She is silent. Her red eyes have travelled away to the red western wave, which seems to be dyed with the blood of all the roses that have blossomed since the world was.

“It makes my blood boil to hear you talk of your stained name!” he says, feverishly, beginning to walk up and down on the little hillock; “how can any stain come near my unsullied lily! and that name!” (stopping beside her, and speaking with the utmost eagerness)—“and that name!—not much longer will it be yours! Soon, very soon, mine, which you prize for its cleanness, will be yours too; will not it, beloved? will not it?”

“Never!” she says, looking solemnly and proudly up to heaven’s vault darkening over their heads. “I shall never bear your or any other man’s name; into no man’s home will I carry my disgrace; till God, who makes all things clean, shall wipe away the stain from me, we two shall meet in love and fellowship never again!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

Wolferstan is wed. The *Helmsley Courier* devotes three columns to the describing of his and his wife’s deportment on the occasion; of how they were clad, who wed them, and who looked on. The *Morning Post*, the *Court Journal*, and half a dozen other papers, have also each and all something to say on this subject; and all these notices Joan has to read aloud to her aunt, and does so read them with an unfaltering voice, and, where it appears seemly and probable that she should do so, makes comments on them. But the wedding is now deposited from its supremacy of interest. The past has ever few courtiers in comparison with

the future. The honey-moon is drawing towards its close, and Joan is still at Portland Villa. Each day her hope of escaping before the dreaded epoch of Wolferstan’s return has grown more sickly; now it is dead. She has heard his wedding-bells. For days after they ceased pealing she hears them still. Sometimes she hears them now at the dearest hour of night deafening her ears. She has heard, and now Fate wills that she shall also see.

The day finally decided upon for her departure is—oh, irony of destiny!—the one after that fixed for the bride-people’s return, and the fancy ball which is to grace it, instead of, as she had ardently prayed, the one before. Our eye speaks much more loudly and distinctly than does our ear. It seems to Joan that what she has already endured, is as nothing compared with what she will suffer when seeing with bodily eyes that felicity of which she yet already knows.

The honey-moon nears its end; it is to be literally only a moon. The young people are to be allowed no margin; they are to be strictly tied down to their four weeks, at the end of which time they are to make their triumphant entry into their paternal home. They are to be dragged from the station by their tenants. Flags are to wave for them, arches are to tower above them, party-colored poles to rise to their glory, and in the evening the Abbey-doors are to be thrown open to admit so great a crowd as even its wide rooms will scarcely contain; a crowd embracing everything which the slenderest claims to gentility in all the country round, and in Helmsley itself.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

When we left Joan it was February, when we find her again it is August. When we left her it was dark, when we find her it is light. When we left her it was night, when we find her it is day—an August day in the afternoon. But there is no sultry August sun-blaze. The whole air is occupied by a fine, small rain, soft as butter, thick as mist, which while it seems to caress you, soaks you to the skin. And so, though it is a half-holiday, the Smith Deloraine school-room is as inhabited as if it were mid-lesson time.

By the open window, almost reached by the rain-plash, sits a little boy with heavy volume supported on small crossed knees, bent head, and hair falling into his studious eyes; evidently buried, full five fathom deep, in the quarto page before him. Another boy, a size larger, and apparently of a bent less intellectual than practical, has stealthily climbed upon a chair, and, by the aid of a grammar and a door ajar, is cautiously arranging a booby-trap for the reception of his sister Faustine, who left the room about ten minutes ago, and may shortly be expected to return.

Did his instructor see him she would undoubtedly put a stop to his exertions; but, as it happens, her back is turned toward him; and, moreover, for the moment, her thoughts are far enough from little boys. She is sitting at the table with brown head leaned on white hand, while before her lies open an old pocket-book, at one entry in which her blue eyes are fixedly staring. For the moment, she sees neither pupils, nor green haze, nor small rain, nor big mops.

Her meditations are broken in upon by the voice of the little student, who suddenly lifts up his stooped head, his intently wrinkled forehead, and his little shrill voice.

“Miss Dering, why was not Queen Caroline a good woman? what did she do? did she cut off people’s heads?”

“Not that I ever heard of, Monty!” replies Joan, laughing a little.

Again there is silence; broken this time by the opening of the door (innocuously, for the booby-trap has missed fire), to admit a little girl, Joan’s eldest and last disciple—a well-to-do pink miss of ten.

“Miss Dering, mamma sends her love to you, and will you mind dining with them to-night?—they will be thirteen if you do not. Why do they mind being thirteen? I asked mamma, and she said it was because of Judas Iscariot!—what has Judas Iscariot to say to it?”

“Going to dine!” cries Rupert, with a long drawn sigh of bitter envy; “how I wish I was going to dine! what a lot I’d eat! I’d have twice of everything!”

“What will you wear, Miss Dering?” asks Faustine, gravely; “but you have so few dresses!—do not you wish that you had as many as mamma? Mills says that mamma might go for a month without stopping, putting on two fresh dresses every day!”

Joan is dressed to the last pin and button. She has taken her farewell look at her own image—that look of temperate approval which a very pretty woman must, in common honesty, award to her own reflection. She would admire such a face were it on any one else’s body. Why not because it is on her own? Joan knows quite as well as you could tell her that she is pretty; but it is such an old piece of news that it brings no great elation or complacency with it.

Joan is in the drawing-room now. She has run rather hastily down stairs, under the impression that she is late; but, on entering, she finds that only ten people besides herself are

yet assembled—that three must therefore be still missing. The host and hostess are both standing on the Persian hearth-rug, though no fire lures them thither. Mrs. Smith Deloraine is a good head taller than her husband. That there may be no mistake about it, she is fond of standing beside him, and drawing up her slight, tall figure to its last inch, so as to display to the world this advantage. Mr. Smith Deloraine is indeed neither so long nor so smart as his name.

As Joan enters, his wife is saying fretfully, “I am sure I do not know how much longer we are going to wait for Mr. Smith Deloraine’s cousin; no one should be allowed more than ten minutes’ law! it is not fair upon one’s cook.”

“But, my love,” suggests the host, with the deferential air of a man who has married above him, “you forget that it is not only my cousin that has played truant—that we have not yet had the pleasure of welcoming your own relatives!”

It is Joan’s first intimation that her employer expected any cousins; but she expresses the proper regrets. Five minutes later, they are all marching in to dinner; Joan bringing up the rear, in composed solitude. As she crosses the hall, she looks upward to send nods and becks up to the children, who, in company with half a dozen lady’s-maids appraising the smart gowns, are hanging over the banisters.

CHAPTER II.

Joan’s position at the dinner-table is between the master of the house and a vacant place; not a promising situation for conversational enjoyment; but Joan has no great wish to converse. Her one desire is that the empty seat should remain empty throughout dinner.

Soup is safely passed, and the party is in mid-fish when Joan’s careless eyes are caught and fettered by the sight of a little young gentleman with a red head, and a small face on which freckles and fright strive for mastery; who is tendering stuttered apologies to the hostess, and having them received in a manner which would make a stouter heart than his quail, a wiser face than his look foolish. Is this the triumphant plutocrat—this unhappy little lad, bathed in scarlet discomfiture from top to toe, who is beginning aimlessly to ramble round the dinner-table; not seeing in his confusion that a kind-hearted footman is trying to guide him to his destined seat?

He is deposited in it at last, and, in a small and shaking voice, refuses soup that has been recalled for him. Joan’s animosity dies on the spot—replaced by an immense surprise, and a hardly inferior compassion. It would be barbarity to address him now, but by-and-by, when he is cooled, fed, and calmed, it will, perhaps, be an act of Christian charity to make some small, soothing observation to him.

For a full quarter of an hour, therefore, she leaves him entirely alone; then, when the last *entrée* is setting out on its travels, she turns her charming, kind face toward him, and, in a low, pleasant voice that would not frighten a mouse or a hare, speaks:

“You mistook the dinner-hour, I dare say? It has happened to me once or twice in my life!”

On perceiving that he is addressed, the flamingo hue again rushes over the little young gentleman, far as the eye can reach. Not daring to look her in the face, he shoots a timorous glance out of the corner of his right eye, from amidst a forest of white eyelashes, and says in a hurried, low voice:

“The clocks were different; ought not I to have come in? Did it matter much?”

Joan smiles involuntarily.

“Not in the least! Why should it? Did you drive over—drive yourself?”

“Oh, dear, no!” (in the same quick, nervous voice). “I never drive, I do not know much about horses; I came in a fly!”

A pause.

“Were you ever here before?” asks Joan, perceiving that the conversation, if kept up at all, must be supported catechism-fashion—question and answer—and being perversely resolved not to let her little victim relapse again into silence.

“No, never!” (looking timidly round the table). “I know nobody. I am quite a stranger in these parts.”

“And yet you belong to this neighborhood?” says Joan, interrogatively. She cannot bring herself to ask more directly after her beloved, desecrated home, and yet has a morbid longing to have it brought into the conversation.

“I suppose so” (in a not very exhilarated tone). “I have lately purchased a place about twelve miles away—a very large place” (sighing); “perhaps you may have heard of it!” Dering Castle!

“Certainly I have heard of it,” she answers, with a smile of exceeding sadness; “not only so, but I used once to live there!”

“Indeed?”

“My name is Dering, I used to live there with my grandfather.”

“Oh, really! You are a member of the late family—I had no idea!” A moment later, in a hesitating tone: “Were you—were you—much attached to the place?”

“I loved it!” she answers; her blue eyes growing moist. “It would be a wonder if I did not. I spent twenty most happy years there.”

“Perhaps—perhaps, if you were so fond of the castle, you might like to run over some day and see the improvements.”

“Improvements!” cries Joan, hastily, “What improvements?” Then, recollecting herself, and in a calmer voice: “Have you, then, been making any improvements?”

“There is a great deal of new furniture introduced,” says the young man, with a faint flash of pleasure in his pale eyes.

“A great deal of new furniture!” repeats Joan, drawing a long breath. “Yes!—and what else?”

“All the old tapestry has been removed, it has been replaced by white and gold, and mirrors in the French taste!”

“White and gold, and mirrors in the French taste!” repeats Joan, mechanically. “Yes—and what else?”

“All the windows throughout the building have been turned into sash ones, the best plate instead of the old casements. No expense has been spared. I think” (with a nervous smile) “that you will say that I have not been idle.”

“I am sure I shall!” she answers in a very low voice, bending down her head.

It is well for Joan, and perhaps also for her neighbor, though he does not think so, that at this moment Mrs. Smith Deloraine beckons away the ladies. Joan rises hastily. Never—never has she left a table, or a table-companion, with greater readiness. As they pass through the hall Mrs. Smith Deloraine lays her hand affectionately on Joan’s shoulder.

“Thank you so much!” she says, lackadaisically; “how good you were!—you drew him out wonderfully!”

“Did I?” says Joan, with a gasp and an hysterical laugh; “then I wish I had not!”

The evening wears away. Coffee is past; the men reappear, Joan’s new *protégé*, on first entering the room, has aimed at her a pitious, shipwrecked look, but seeing her palisaded round by women, his heart fails him; and he remains planted on the hearth-rug—the spot whither he had first drifted.

There he stands, a wretched little Cripple, on his desert island of hearth-rug. Joan looks at him, and smiles maliciously.

It is ten o’clock now, and past; and the hostess’s expected cousins are overdue. She has observed several times that they will be hungry—that they will be tired—that she wishes they would come; and has succeeded in awakening a feeling of faint expectancy in the breasts of the company generally, when, at length, the listened-for carriage-wheels are heard crunching the gravel of the drive; the hall-door is rung; servants hasten to answer the summons, and Mrs. Smith Deloraine herself hurries out, leaving the door open behind her. There is a lull in the talk among those who are left behind; all, however little addicted to eavesdropping, involuntarily listening—listening to the sound of cheerful, mixed voices that has risen in the adjoining hall; voices welcoming—voices welcomed—voices questioning, replying, ejaculating. At first they all talk at once, and you can detect no separate tones; but after a moment or two a strange woman’s voice, clear, rather loud, raises itself above the others.

Before they are well over the threshold, Joan’s eyes have fastened upon, and taken possession of the entering forms. What new trick of Fate is it? There is no need for a second look. The first one darted, lightning-quick, has assured her, past the possibility of error, that the new-comer’s face and figure are not less familiar to her than were her voice and her laugh; and that face, figure, voice, laugh, belong to none other than to Lalage Wolferstan! And if the woman be Lalage, who then is this handsome, dusty man that is stepping after her, making polite, short answers to his new host’s volleyed civilities? Who is he likely to be? Who but her husband? Who but Anthony?

SCIENTIFIC.

Window-plants in Germany are often watered with cold tea or coffee. The effects are said to be beneficial.

The electric light is becoming common in Paris in connection with works that have to be carried on during the night. A large lamp has been established in the Avenue de l’Opera, and others are employed in the Trocadero, in connection with the building of the Exhibition Palace.

An inventor proposes a vessel that will not be affected by waves at sea. A hollow body is to be submerged several yards below the surface of the water; above the surface, supported by strong posts, is to be the part of the vessel for passengers. The propelling machinery is to be in the submerged portion.

Among little gems that seem adapted to all purposes, and as well to one as to another, is *Cupressus hyssopifolia*. It grows but a foot in height, is somewhat spreading in habit, and the slight stems are clothed with little linear-elliptical leaves of a dark, shining green, from the axis of which spring the small, rosy-lilac flowers that bloom perpetually.

The wicks of lighted paraffin-lamps should never be turned low. In this position of the wick, if the oil is bad, a vapour with an innumerable quantity of specks of soot diffuses itself through the apartment, and so affects the nose and respiratory organs that one runs a danger of suffocation while falling asleep. It is advisable therefore to allow the lamp to burn brightly or to extinguish it entirely.

The Rotafrenum is the name of an ingenious and simple contrivance—recently patented—which has been designed for the purpose of preventing the too often recurring accidents arising from the self-starting of perambulators on sloping pavements or inclined ways. The apparatus costs little, and can be applied to any child’s carriage, the novel brake-power coming into play immediately the person who has the care of the perambulator releases his or her hold of the cranks.